

“THE KEYS TO A BLESSED LIFE”

Big Idea . . . Part 9: Blessed are the PERSECUTED

Matt. 5:10-12

INTRO: Finally, the 8th and last of the B’s.

ORDER: Now, in vv.10-12, Jesus gives the inevitable consequence of a godly life in a godless society - persecution. Again, we are taken by surprise. You’d think Beatitude people would be applauded, not booed. You’d expect one of the great hymns of the B-people would be, “For he’s a jolly good fellow; . . . that nobody can deny.” Not so - Jesus says those who demonstrate these keys will be persecuted. An occupational hazard of B-living is that peacemakers are often troublemakers. One called this, “The rough results of r’ness.” Let’s see 3 things in our last B:

I. THE REALITY OF PERSECUTION (v.10 “are persecuted”; v.11 “when”)

A. Notice, **WHO** will be persecuted?

1. “Those” who live a B-lifestyle will pay a price. It *began* when Cain killed Abel. Moses “chose to be mistreated along with the people of God...” (Heb. 11:25) than to compromise in Egypt. Plus: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Samuel, Elijah, Stephen, Peter, James, John, Paul.
2. It *continued* with the Prophets (5:12b) and with Christ’s own disciples, all but John (exiled) dying a martyr’s death. We are not alone. The first Apostles . . .
3. The godly have *always been* persecuted for their faith (Ph. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus didn’t come to make life easy, but to make people great. The persecuted are in good company. In U.S. not so much violent aggression as silent repression and pressure to conform.

B. **HOW** will we be persecuted? (v.11)

We will be insulted, persecuted (harassed), & “falsely” accused (lied about-slandered). Verbal persecution more in view. Verbally ridiculed and mocked; maybe socially ostracized. People are “on-your-case”. Ref: 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-27; 12:5-10. *Barclay adds . . .*

C. **WHY** will be persecuted?

v.10 says “for righteousness sake” and v.11 says “on my account.” Persecuted, NOT because we are obnoxious or fanatical, but because we are like Him. Be sure you are persecuted because you don’t deserve it (“falsely”) rather than because you do (1 Pet. 3:13-17; 4:12-19). Ref.: John 15:18-24; 16:1-4. **They hate the Jesus in us!** True

persecution comes because we dare to live the Beatitudes! Darkness hates light (Jn. 3:20).

TRUTH: Opposition is a normal Christian experience, so expect it.

STATS . . .

- D. **WHEN** will be persecuted? v.11 says “when” not “if”. Don’t be surprised, afraid, ashamed, retaliate.

II. THE RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION (v.12 “rejoice and be glad”)

- A. Note, what He *didn’t* say - react, run, retaliate, complain, fit in so can avoid, etc. He said, “Rejoice - be exceedingly joyful about it!” See James 1:2 and 1 Pet. 4:13 . . . attitude is everything!
- B. Later in vv.43ff Jesus added to love & pray for those who persecute us.
- C. “*Why rejoice?*” When we have the proper attitude in persecution (joy), our opportunities to show loyalty, to witness, and to grow increase. (See Psa. 119:67, 71; 1 Pet. 4:14). What enables me to respond in joy?

III. THE REWARDS FOR PERSECUTION (v.12)

- A. We are “double-blessed”! In first seven B we are blessed. Our Lord reserves a double-blessing for the persecuted who stand for Him. There are times when we can only make it through by focusing on the rewards promised.
1. First blessed is NOW a *Present Reality* to enjoy (v. 10 “theirs is the KOH”). Make us more like Jesus. Strengthens our faith (1 Pet. 1:7). He is with us.
 2. Second blessing is LATER, a *future prospect* to expect to enjoy (v. 12 “great is your reward in heaven”) - Though not told exactly what this reward *in* heaven is, we are told whatever it is, it is GREAT! I have a guess (2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Jn. 3:1-3! The persecution is only for some time, the reward is for eternity. Paul said, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him. (2 Tim. 2:12). Assurance of salvation and heavenly home is our reward.

ILLUS: Savanarola...

ILLUS: Polycarp...

CONC: Reread vv.10-12... A persecuted people and persecuted church is a powerful witness.